

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2020, AT 6:00 P.M., IN THE FLORENCE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, LOCATED AT 775 N. MAIN STREET, FLORENCE, ARIZONA. ZOOM MEETING ONLY.

SPECIAL NOTICE REGARDING PUBLIC MEETINGS

Due to the risks to public health caused by the possible spread of the COVID-19 virus at public gatherings, the Town of Florence has authorized attendance through technological means. In reliance on, and in compliance with, the March 13, 2020 Opinion issued by Attorney General Mark Brnovich, and in conjunction with the Emergency Proclamation signed by Mayor Tara Walter, on March 18, 2020. The Town of Florence provides this special advance notice of the technological means through which public meetings may be accessed. Public wishing to provide comment at the meeting should contact the Town Clerk in by 5:00 p.m. the day of the meeting.

The agenda for this meeting is as follows:

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Walter called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Tara Walter, John Anderson, Karen Wall, Kristen Larsen, Michelle Cordes, Judy Hughes

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor Walter called for a moment of silence.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Walter led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Call to the Public for public comment on issues within the jurisdiction of the Town Council. Council rules limit public comment to three minutes. Individual Councilmembers may respond to criticism made by those commenting, may ask staff to review a matter raised or may ask that a matter be put on a future agenda. However, members of the Council shall not discuss or take action on any matter during an open call to the public unless the matters are properly noticed for discussion and legal action.

Mr. Roger Biede, Executive Director, Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce (“Chamber”), expressed his appreciation to Ms. Jennifer Evans, Management Analyst, for her service to the Chamber. She has been a Chamber partner for many years. He looks forward to working with her in the future on other items.

Ms. Linda Turner, Florence Resident, voiced her concern regarding the online survey. She has tried to complete it several times and there is no link when she clicks on the survey.

Ms. Turner stated that she is aware that the Council will be voting on the Vice-Mayor position and wanted to acknowledge the tremendous work that Councilmember Cordes does. She hopes that Councilmember Cordes is nominated and considered for the Vice-Mayor position.

Mr. Trenton Shaffer, IT Manager, stated that he was unaware that the link was not working for the survey and will ensure that the link is fixed.

Ms. Cathy Adam, Florence Resident, stated expressed her appreciation to the late Councilmember Bill Hawkins, Councilmember Wall, and Mr. Tom Smith. They all care deeply for Florence and it is indicative of their work.

SWEARING IN OF NEW COUNCIL

A video was played in which Honorable Roger A. Valdez, Florence Municipal Judge, swore in Mayor Tara Walter, Councilmember Kristen Larsen, Councilmember Arthur Neal, and Councilmember Johnie Mendoza.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Walter, Anderson, Larsen, Cordes, Hughes, Neal, Mendoza

PRESENTATIONS

Presentation of Community Appreciation Award to William “Bill” Hawkins for 14 years of service.

Mayor Walter stated that this item will be removed to a different date in which his family can be present to receive the award.

Presentation of Community Appreciation Award to Karen Wall for five years of service.

A video was played in which Councilmember Wall received her years of service.

Mayor Walter acknowledged Councilmember Wall for her years of services, her contribution to the Town and her assistance in helping others grow. She thanked her for all that she has done for the Town and hopes to work with her in other endeavors.

Councilmember Wall stated that she did not realize how complex it is to manage and operate a community. She appreciates her fellow Councilmembers and thanked them for the ability to discuss their differences of opinion and work collectively to find resolution and what is best for Florence. She thanked staff and management for how much work they do in order to have the Town run smoothly.

Councilmember Wall stated that she will be working with the museum in the future. The time commitment will not be as much as the Council and will provide her an opportunity to do some of things that she has been wanting to do.

Councilmember Wall thanked all those who have supported her while she was on Council.

Mayor Walter presented Councilmember Wall a plaque in gratitude and appreciation for her tenure and work on the Council. She was also presented with a bouquet of flowers and a gift card.

Vice-Mayor Anderson stated that Councilmember Wall has been a great influence on himself and the other Councilmembers. She will be missed.

Councilmember Larsen expressed her gratitude for her guidance and for helping her. She appreciates all that she has given to the Town and looks forward to working with her in the future in other roles.

Councilmember Cordes stated that she will definitely be missed. She appreciates all the research that she has done and for helping Council see things that from different perspectives.

Presentation of League of Cities and Town Service Award in Appreciation to Tara Walter for eight years of service.

A video was presented in which the League of Arizona Cities and Towns Service Award was presented to Mayor Walter for her eight years of service.

Mr. Brent Billingsley, Town Manager, read the inscription of the award into the record:

“Eight years of service, dedication, strong effective local government in Arizona, presented to Tara Walter in recognition of eight years of service and dedication to local government in Arizona on September 1, 2020, bestowed by the League of Arizona Cities and Towns, signed Tom Belche.”

Mr. Billingsley stated that the heroes of local government are elected officials. He congratulated Mayor Walter for her service and dedication to our community for the last

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years and for her continued work in upcoming next four years.

Presentation of a Key to the Town and Proclamation to Tom Smith.

A video was presented in which Mr. Tom Smith was presented with the Key to the Town and a proclamation in his honor at his home.

Mayor Walter stated that Mr. Smith has given much of his time for the betterment of Florence. A proclamation in his honor, was read into the record, which states:

“WHEREAS, Tom Smith was born in Canada, lived in Peru, Columbia, Washington State, California, and Alabama, where he became a US Citizen, but chose to settle down in Florence, Arizona; and

WHEREAS, Tom is the nephew of Jack Purvis, the 1st editor of the Florence Reminder; and

WHEREAS, Tom graduated from Florence High School, Class of 1958, and lettered as a Gopher on the football team, and then attended the University of Arizona; and

WHEREAS, He married Lynn Steinko in 1962; and together have had a passion for the preservation of Florence; and

WHEREAS, Tom actively contributed to our community through the Lions Club (Regional Officer), Pinal County Historical Society (Lifetime Member and Treasurer), Pinal County Mounted Posse, and served on the first Make a Wish Foundation Board, along with Lynn; and

WHEREAS, Tom served 12 years on the Florence Town Council, elected in 2002 running on the slogan “Time for a Change” he served as Vice Mayor, and he was on the Historic District Advisory Commission, Police and Fire Public Safety Retirement Board, Parks Advisory Board; and participated in the League of Arizona Cities and Towns and the Arizona Historic Preservation Conference Board; and

WHEREAS, He, along with his wife Lynn, have made the most significant, individual impact on revitalizing the Historic District by purchasing and rehabilitating four historic adobe buildings listed as “Contributing” in the Inventory: John Nicholas Residence, 1st Nicholas Beer Hall, the W.C. Smith/Rittenhouse/Arriola’s Cosmopolitan Stores and recently saved the Cuen Building from demolition; and

WHEREAS, Tom has demonstrated his great love of Florence as shown by his commitment and dedication to preserving and revitalizing Florence.”

Mayor Walter proclaimed December 19, 2020 as Tom Smith Day in the Town of Florence.

Mayor Walter state that she enjoyed serving alongside Mr. Smith on the Council and is honored to present the Key to the Town to him.

Mr. Smith stated that Florence is his home. He thanked the Council and the employees for their service to the community. He stated that it takes everyone to get the job done. He thanked the Town for the recognition, proclamation, and Key to the Town.

Councilmember Cordes stated that it is apparent how much the Smith's love the Town by their commitment to the community and all that they do. She thanked Mr. Smith for all that he had done for the Town.

Councilmember Larsen stated that it is an honor to recognize and award Mr. Smith a Key to the Town. He will definitely be a legacy in the community and his work will live on for generations to come.

Ms. Candy Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Smith's daughter, thanked the Town for honoring her father. She stated that he really loves Florence.

Ms. Lynn Smith, wife of Mr. Smith, thanked the Council for recognizing her husband.

Mr. Billingsley stated that he was honored to recognize Mr. Smith and present him the Key to the Town. He stated that they are a gracious couple and were very excited to be recognized.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of appointing a member of Council to serve as Vice-Mayor.

Mayor Walter thanked Vice-Mayor Anderson for serving as Vice-Mayor for the past two years. She appreciated his service and was hoping that he would like to be nominated for Vice-Mayor for two more years, but he would like to try new things while on Council.

Mayor Walter explained the responsibility of being a Vice-Mayor. She stated that Councilmember Larsen has served the longest on the Council and receive the most votes out of and candidates and was elected in the primary. She appreciates how she can listen to all aspects and see different perspectives and can still move forward in a professional manner.

Mayor Walter nominated Councilmember Larsen as Vice-Mayor.

Councilmember Larsen accepted the nomination for Vice-Mayor.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Mendoza – Yes
Councilmember Neal – No
Councilmember Hughes – No
Councilmember Cordes - No
Councilmember Larsen – Yes
Vice-Mayor Anderson – No
Mayor Walter – Yes

Nomination fails: Yes: 3; No 4

Councilmember Hughes nominates Councilmember Cordes for Vice-Mayor.

Councilmember Cordes accepts the nomination for Vice-Mayor.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Mendoza – No
Councilmember Neal – Yes
Councilmember Hughes – Yes
Councilmember Cordes - Yes
Councilmember Larsen – No
Vice-Mayor Anderson – Yes
Mayor Walter – No

Nomination Passed: Yes: 4; No: 3

Mayor's Appointment of Council Liaison Assignments.

Mayor Walter appointed the following Councilmembers to the following:

Local Liaison Appointments:

Board of Appeals: Vice-Mayor Cordes
Community Services Advisory Board: Councilmember Anderson and Councilmember Larsen
Historic District Advisory Commission: Councilmember Neal
Florence Industrial Development Authority Inc.: Councilmember Hughes
Planning and Zoning Commission: Councilmember Larsen
Strategic Planning Advisory Committee: to be appointed after codification.
Fire and Police Public Safety Retirement Boards: Councilmember Mendoza
Budget Committee: Mayor Walter, Councilmember Larsen and Councilmember Mendoza

Florence Unified School District: Councilmember Mendoza
Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce: Councilmember Anderson
Native American Community Tribes: Councilmember Neal
Pinal Water Augmentation Authority: Councilmember Hughes
Pinal Partnership: Vice-Mayor Cordes

Mayor Liaison Duties:

Arizona Legislature
Central Arizona Association of Governments
League of Arizona Cities and Towns Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee
League of Arizona Cities and Towns Resolution Committee
Maricopa Association of Governments
Regional Transportation Authority

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of appointment of Board and Commissions:

1. **Appointment of Cathy Adams to the Board of Appeals with a term to expire December 31, 2024.**
2. **Appointment of Cindy DiNardo, David Lewis, Lawrence Michael Gutierrez, and Cydni Ambrosio to the Community Services Advisory Committee with a term to expire December 31, 2023.**
3. **Appointment of Debbie Novotny and Janet Deutmeyer to the Historic District Advisory Committee with a term to expire December 31, 2023.**
4. **Appointment of Ed Curran, Kenneth Wallace, and Alfred Celaya to the Industrial Development Authority with terms to expire December 31, 2026.**
5. **Mayor to appoint an interview panel to interview applicants for the Planning and Zoning Commission.**

Mayor Walter stated that Items 1 through 4 are postponed until a meeting in January 2021.

Mayor Walter requested that the Mayor, respective Council Liaison, and respective Staff Liaison be appointed as the interview panel for the next two years for the boards and commissions.

On motions of Vice-Mayor Cordes, seconded by Councilmember Larsen and carried (7-0) to appoint the Mayor, Council Liaison and Staff Liaison as the interview panel for the next two years.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of authorizing the Town of Florence to purchase 4,985 Extinguished Credits from Greenstone Water Credits, LLC, A Delaware Limited Liability Company, for Pinal Active Management Area Extinguishment Credits.

Mr. Billingsley provided a staff report which outline the following:

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The Town of Florence has an Assured Water supply Designation (AWS), more commonly known as a Decision and Order (D&O), by ADWR. In order for the Town to obtain and maintain this designation, it must demonstrate, among other requirements, that its water supplies will be physically, legally, and continually available for 100 years. Staff has been working toward modifying our designation to acknowledge and increase of water supply that could result from the acquisition of water supplies within the Pinal AMA and from groundwater recharge.

Mr. Billingsley stated that the Town currently utilizes a relationship with Central Arizona Ground Water Replenishment District (CAGRD) to assure a 100-year water supply. CAGRD provides the opportunity for water providers to obtain paper water access to renewable resources without having to construct the infrastructure necessary to physically convey those resources to new developments. In effect, the water provider need only install a local ground-water system to supply the water needs of the development. The CAGRD is not mandated to hydrologically balance local ground-water withdrawals with aquifer replenishment. Instead, the CAGRD relies on paper-water accounting that allows groundwater pumping in one area of an AMA to be offset by the recharge of Colorado River water in another area of the same AMA. Growth which solely depends on the CAGRD to obtain an AWS designation would result in a paper-water balance of ground water withdrawals with ground water replenishment. Utilizing the CAGRD in this fashion is not consistent with the Town's interests because reliance on paper-water accounting would circumvent the hydrologic-based principle of aquifer stewardship.

Under the Assured Water Supply (AWS) Program, designated water providers are granted a volume of allowable ground water withdrawals without incurring a replenishment obligation (ground water allowance). This volume was considered a phase-in allowance to assist water providers in shifting from reliance on mined ground water to renewable supplies. Allowable ground water can also be credited over time. An annual incidental recharge credit is accrued based on four (4) percent of the total potable and reclaimed water produced in the previous calendar year.

Long-term storage credits are accrued when renewable water supplies are recharged to the aquifer for recovery in a subsequent year.

The owner of an irrigation grandfathered groundwater right has the option of permanently retiring his farmland, in full or in part at a time of his own choosing and depending on a date specified in the Assured Water Supply Rules, can create a groundwater credit that can be used by the developer to allow an orderly transition over time to non-groundwater supplies. Groundwater credits, also known as extinguishment credits, may be sold to another party, and transferred to be used anywhere within the same Active Management Area, provided those credits have not already been pledged toward an Assured Water Supply certificate or designation and that the applicant has demonstrated that the water will be physically available for 100 years at the location of withdrawal.

In September of 2018, Town Council ratified a Purchase Agreement that would facilitate purchase of Extinguishment Credits utilizing new proceeds of Town income from the Tonopah Irrigation and Drainage District/CAGRD Long Term Storage Credit Agreements. The negotiated price of these Extinguishment Credits is a fraction of the current 2019/2020 CAGRD Total Assessment Rate of \$727 per acre foot and less than half of the 2019 Central Arizona Project (CAP) "Excess Water value of \$199 per acre foot. Purchased credits can be used to offset potential CAGRD charges.

Mr. Billingsley provided a brief history and explanation of the Town's agreement with regards to Town's water credits and how it benefits the Town in the future.

On motion of Councilmember Anderson, seconded by Councilmember Larsen and carried (7-0) to authorize the Town of Florence to purchase 4,985 Extinguished Credits from Greenstone Water Credits, LLC, A Delaware Limited Liability Company, For Pinal Active Management Area Extinguishing Credits.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Billingsley stated the Covid-19 peak that the Town is seeing is extremely larger than what the Town experienced in the summer. Monday totals are always lower-case totals and as of today (December 14, 2020), there are 11,795 cases statewide. Everyone is worried how much higher the numbers will be tomorrow. This case number is the third highest number since Covid-19 began. This equates to 400 new cases in the Florence zip code, with approximately 200 cases being from the prisons. The average cases and deaths per day are skyrocketing. He urged everyone to wear masks, to social-distance and stay home when possible and to follow all safety protocols.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Ms. Nancy Larsen, Florence Resident, congratulated Vice-Mayor Cordes on becoming the new Vice-Mayor. She stated that Vice-Mayor Cordes' passion and commitment to the Town of Florence has been unparalleled and she is pleased that she will be representing Florence in that role.

CALL TO THE COUNCIL – CURRENT EVENTS ONLY

Councilmember Mendoza thanked the citizens for voting for him. He also thanked Councilmember Wall and Councilmember Hawkins for their service on the Town Council. He will do his best to fill those shoes as he serves on the Council.

Councilmember Mendoza stated he loves Florence and looks forward to continuing with the positive changes.

Councilmember Neal thanked the citizens for voting for him. He is looking for to helping Florence in any way possible. He congratulated Vice-Mayor Cordes for her appointment

to Vice-Mayor. He wished Councilmember Wall and Tom Smith the best. He is excited to learn and do his best for Florence.

Councilmember Hughes congratulated Councilmember Mendoza and Councilmember Neal and welcomed them to the Council. She thanked Councilmember Anderson for his service as Vice-Mayor. She congratulated Vice-Mayor Cordes on her appointment. She wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Councilmember Larsen stated that she is happy to have retained her seat on the Council. She welcomed Councilmember Mendoza and Councilmember Neal. She looks forward to working with them. She thanked Councilmember Anderson for his service as Vice-Mayor. She stated that she will miss Councilmember Wall and congratulated Vice-Mayor Cordes on her appointment.

Councilmember Anderson stated it was an honor to service as Vice-Mayor and thanked everyone for their support. He welcomed Councilmember Neal and Councilmember Mendoza. He stated that he looks forward to working with them. He congratulated Vice-Mayor Cordes on her appointment. He expressed his concern regarding the scheduled special events amid the pandemic. He is concerned as to how the spread can be mitigated. He does not like to see events get canceled because of the economic impact; however, he does not want people to contract the virus at the events either. The news is always showing where the spread of the virus occurred at public events. He asked that events be postponed until the vaccination is here and able to be administered.

Vice-Mayor Cordes thanked everyone for their support encouraging her to step forward as Vice-Mayor and for electing her as Vice-Mayor. She thanked Councilmember Anderson for all that he has done on the Council. She appreciates his humor. She thanked all those who ran for Council and congratulated Councilmember Neal and Councilmember Mendoza. She reminded everyone to check in on their neighbor. Mental Health is important to recognize and to help everyone during this difficult time. She wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

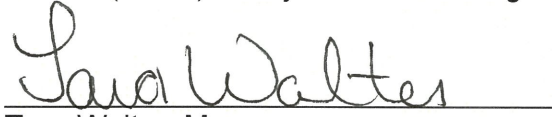
Mayor Walter congratulated all those who were elected and to the appointments. She looks forward to working with everyone. They will have a goal setting work session in January. She stated that there is a lot to be thankful for. People are going out of their way to help families. Events were planned to bring joy to the community. She stated that it is beautiful to see Main Street lit up. She thanked the businesses for decorating their businesses. She stated that there is an ice-skating rink for everyone to enjoy. There will be two events in the near future: Third Fridays and The Old West Days. The Covid Task Force has put mitigation efforts in place as they work to everyone's safety while allowing the public to enjoy the holidays.

Mayor Walter thanked Councilmember Wall, Tom Smith, and Councilmember Hawkins for all that they have done for the community. She stated that it takes everyone, past and present Council, that have brought forward positive change. She wished everyone a Happy Holiday Season.

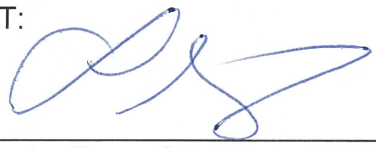
ADJOURNMENT

Council may go into Executive Session at any time during the meeting for the purpose of obtaining legal advice from the Town's Attorney(s) on any of the agenda items pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3). One or more members of Council may appear for part or all of the meeting including Executive Session telephonically.


On motion of Councilmember Anderson, seconded by Councilmember Hughes and carried (7 to 0) to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 pm.


Tara Walter, Mayor

ATTEST:


Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk

I certify that the following is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Florence Town Council meeting held on December 14, 2020, and that the meeting was duly called to order and that a quorum was present.


Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk

